

Corridor Management Plans

The objective and purpose of corridor management plans is to conserve the intrinsic values of a byway in sustainable balance with economic development and tourism. It is a process to identify and document resources with broad community involvement, monitoring and continued advocacy. A corridor management plan reflects the community's vision of its byway with an implementable action plan to establish and maintain the Byway. The development of the plan is expected to be a grass-roots driven process, and is limited only by the imagination and vision of the participants.

Intrinsic Resources of a Byway

Intrinsic resources are characteristics that make a place unique. Six categories of these resources were identified as giving byways their special sense of place. For the purpose of the Lake Champlain Byway planning program, historic and archeological qualities were combined into the historic category and the intrinsic resource of "working landscape" was added to reflect the Champlain Valley's agricultural heritage.

Natural

Found in unusual geologic formations, topography, climate, hydrologic features (e.g., streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands and oceans), wildlife, and habitats for rare or endangered species.

Scenic

Includes visually appealing natural and cultural landscape elements that offer a heightened or memorable visual experience. Some of the potential elements that contribute to scenic values include water and landform features, landscape compositions and effects, vegetation patterns, structures, and roadway characteristics.

Historic

Sites, districts, structures, artifacts, or other evidences of human activities that represent our history. They may be places where significant historic events occurred, or associated with an important personality. Areas where the landscape or landforms influenced an event as well as historic roadways and travel corridors are also potential resources. Also included are archaeological resource such as evidence of farms, hunting, or gathering areas, burial sites, artifacts, and building remnants.

Recreational

Both active and passive recreation features, such as state and local parks, reforestation areas, hiking trails, water access points, bike and pedestrian trails, indoor recreation facilities, and cross-country and downhill ski areas.

Cultural

Heritage or resources that were important in the course of human events. Examples may include churches, museums, colleges/schools, festival sites, or other civic resources. Sites or areas of ethnic importance and structures or landscaping that possess artistic merit or represent achievements in architecture, engineering, technology, design or scientific research and development are possible resources.

Working Landscape

Examples include landscapes related to farming, forestry, mineral extraction, or working waterfronts. Sites or areas of importance to the development of the industries and areas where the landforms strongly influenced a development pattern are resources. Structures or landscaping that are particularly representative of their period, or represent achievements in technology or the development in agriculture are possible resources.

LAKE CHAMPLAIN BYWAY



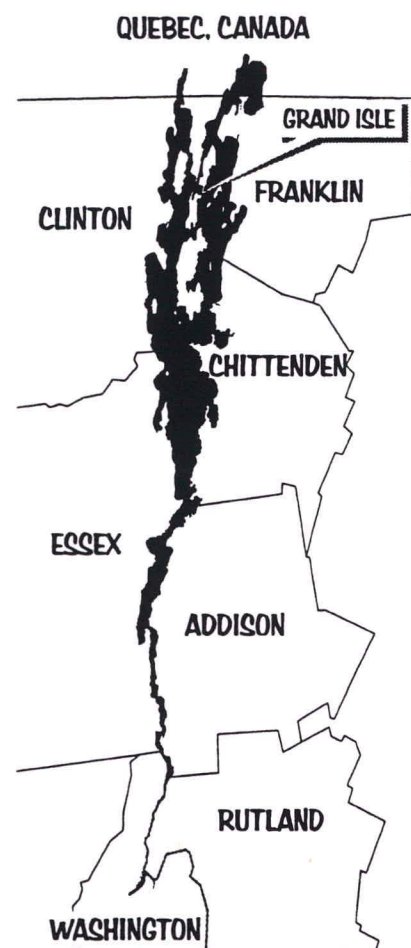
The New York counties of Clinton, Essex, and Washington and Vermont counties of Addison, Chittenden, Franklin, Grand Isle, and Rutland came together for Lake Champlain Byways, a new approach to economic development through the recognition of local heritage and resources. The local communities within each county worked together to create a shared identity for the entire Lake Champlain region as the basis for an action plan. This grass-roots process identifies ways to balance economic development and tourism with stewardship of the resources. The project was designed to build on the work of existing organizations for broad participation of diverse partners.

Each New York and Vermont county surrounding the Lake established and staffed a Local Advisory Committee (LAC) that developed the local vision, goals, and objectives for the project. Representatives of the participated in regional efforts to unify the Byways program and identify actions to implement the plan. The Byways project was product-oriented.

Project Approach

The Byway planning process addressed the needs of the natural, cultural, recreational, and historical resources of the Lake Champlain region. By using a unified theme for the region, each county identified its resources that contribute to the “story” of the region. Members of the LAC are undertaking one or more projects that identify the issues and opportunities to be addressed by the Corridor Management Plan. The process of developing these projects can:

- Generate interest in the project — something that sparks imagination and creativity.
- Create something that allows local interpretation of the resources.
- Provide a framework that invites contributions from the many players that are important to the planning process of the project.
- Develop ownership and identify roles for the management of the region’s resources.
- Provide a structure that facilitates communication between counties to unify the lake region.
- Create a product through the planning process that is meaningful and worthwhile.



Lake Champlain Byway Regional Goals

Through the “visioning” process of the project, the Local Advisory Committees have established the following list of Regional Goals. No prioritization of these goals has been established.

- Establish public restrooms throughout the region.
- Establish a network of *Waypoint Communities* that would serve as a hub for Byway activities and could provide visitor information and services.
- Strengthen the inter-modal transportation infrastructure to reduce the visitors dependency on automobile travel (biking, ferry, rail, bus, walking).
- Improve access to the “Lake Champlain Experience.”
- Strengthen the role of the Lake as the unifying feature of the two-state, two-nation region — i.e. Lake Champlain Region image and identity for tourism promotion and economic development.
- Overcome jurisdictional boundaries for Regional activities — i.e. interpretive products, marketing and information, resource protection, transportation, fishing licenses.
- Establish a Regional Ag-tourism, marketing and education initiative.
- Maximize the “Lake Champlain Experience” for the existing travelers through the Region — target existing visitors to stop and stay, rather than just drive through.
- Establish a network of “themed” routes for various modes of transportation that links sites throughout the Lake Champlain Region — i.e. Birding Trail, Geology Trail, etc.
- Manage the roadsides to enhance the community character and qualities — i.e. stonewalls, wildflower plantings, historic markers with pull-offs.

A Lake Champlain Byways *Waypoint Community* is one that is located within the Lake Champlain Byway Corridor along a designated Lake Champlain Byways Route; offers (or has the potential to offer) multi-modal transportation, visitor services and amenities, traveler information, public restrooms; and can serve as a “hub” for the Byway traveler to nearby Byway resources that may not be located along a designated route.

A Unified Regional Theme

The Lake Champlain Region is so rich in its historic, natural, and cultural resources that it almost becomes overwhelming to identify one theme for protection, interpretation, enhancement, and promotion efforts. Through a visioning process, the LACs have identified several themes that are valued throughout the region:

- *The Military History*
- *Agriculture*
- *Industrial Development*
- *Natural Systems*
- *People and Communities*

In an effort to integrate these resources into a unified theme for the entire region, the following theme is guiding the project:

The Four Lives of Lake Champlain

1. Pre-European Influence
2. Exploration and Military
3. Industrial and Commercial
4. Recreation and Tourism

Each one of these “lives” has scenic, historic, recreational, natural, and cultural resources that reflect the unique qualities within each county that surrounds the lake. Through the Byways planning process, we are identifying these resources at the local level, and weaving them together through the “four lives” to create an integrated story for the region.

Numerous studies have consistently identified what motivates people to live or visit the Lake Champlain region:

- The community “feel” of the small villages and towns
- Abundant outdoor activities and recreational opportunities
- Rich and diverse historical resources
- The scenic qualities of the natural environment and rural landscape
- A chance to become “renewed” in peaceful settings

Through the Lake Champlain Byways planning process, the Local Advisory Committees have identified what is special about their county, and what they would like to address in the Byway Corridor Management Plan.

Celebration Champlain

The Lake Champlain Byways Economic Study identified interest in a two-state, multi-nation, six-year regional celebration of the 400th anniversary of Champlain’s arrival to the Richelieu River in 1603 and Lake Champlain in 1609.

The celebration would be a massive joint effort across all jurisdictions (multi-county/state/nation). It would extend from 2003-2009, enabling: 1) a substantial advance planning period for establishing an organizational framework, preparing program plans, and gathering necessary resources; and 2) an extended implementation period to complete major community and economic development initiatives and to conduct identity-building multi-year special events.

Such a celebration would highlight the full story of the Richelieu-Champlain region, interweaving multiple historical themes from geological pre-history, to the lives and times of native peoples, to European settlement and the creation of current nations, through to the industrial, post-industrial and technology eras. Cultural traditions and creative expression of all local peoples would be highlighted through coordinated special events and preservation and enhancement of cultural/heritage sites. Environmentally-oriented outdoor recreational opportunities (bicycling, hiking, paddle sports, fishing, etc.) would be targeted for development during the celebration period. The region’s agricultural legacy and the current state of family farms and farming families would be a focus during this period.

The celebration would be designed to leave a legacy of community and economic development for the region. It is envisioned that collaborative efforts within communities and between and among municipalities, counties, states and nations would be targeted to enhancing opportunities for community and economic growth while sustaining the natural setting that makes the region so special. These development efforts would specifically include development of waterfront access and site improvements, and coordinated multi-modal transportation planning and development to minimize impacts of increased vehicles on the region’s roadways.

Taken together, the quality-of-life and physical improvements developed during the celebration period would provide a special opportunity to establish a coordinated multi-year regional marketing strategy to imprint the identity of the region in the minds of targeted visitor and business re-location markets. A program to build local appreciation and awareness of the region's history and assets would be a key element of this marketing strategy.

GRAND ISLE COUNTY

The Islands Experience

The Champlain Islands *are* Vermont – surrounded by water. With a quiet rural charm, the landscape sports waterside farms, orchards and a vineyard; the largest natural sand beach in Vermont; abundant recreational opportunities including year-round fishing, boating, swimming, and skating; and historic Revolutionary War villages. Linked in a 27-mile chain and connected to the mainland by bridges, causeways, and a land connection to Canada, the Islands provide an extraordinary combination of endless water surrounded by picturesque mountains. Small but powerful, they are home to 5,681 (1995 VT Dept. Of Health Estimates) year-round residents whose distinct independent spirit continues a proud tradition of self-sufficiency.

As the center of the Lake Champlain Byways communities, the Champlain Islands are the place where Vermont, New York, and Quebec meet. History, natural resources, and working landscape provide the background for the Island experience, but visitors come to the Islands primarily to experience its peaceful lakeside settings and to participate in recreational activities. Tourism has been a mainstay of island life since the early 1900s when visitors from throughout New England, Northern New York, and Southern Quebec visited the islands by steamboat. Vice President Teddy Roosevelt was visiting Isle La Motte when the news came that President McKinley had been shot. Today, summer cottages line the shore, and tourism comprises approximately 90% of the economy of the Islands.

County Approach

Grand Isle County embarked on the Byways planning process to increase to increase the benefits and reduce the impacts of tourism on local communities. Residents saw a need for service and infrastructure enhancements, resource protection strategies, and visitor education.

The effort represents the collective ideas of the County's residents and community groups, municipal leaders, business owners, the Lake Champlain Islands Chamber of Commerce, and Vermont State Parks. The Northwest Regional Planning Commission coordinated the multi-town project. Throughout the two-year process, citizens attended workshops, local advisory committee meetings, and informational sessions to provide their thoughts and ideas. They also



Grand Isle County Vision

The low-key atmosphere of communities and spectacular views of Lake Champlain inject local and out-of-town travelers in Grand Isle County with a sense of well being and relaxation. A Lake Champlain Byways future will assist in managing the impacts of tourism, continue efforts to coordinate travel and tourism, and strengthen local communities. It will work within the framework of infrastructure that we are able to provide and will continue the lifestyles and variety of recreational opportunities that are important to us.

participated in other countywide projects that contributed to the Byways Corridor Management Plan. These projects included the County Roadway Corridor Study, the County Strategic Development Plan, and the Regional Marketing Organization. Municipal leader “tours” helped gather information and ideas from village and town leaders. Regular newsletters provided updates on the Lake Champlain Byways project and related efforts.

As the Byways effort developed, the Islands’ importance to the “Lake Champlain Experience” became increasingly clear. A focus on the Lake made the Islands the attractive centerpiece of a lake-wide banquet, showcasing their unique character and individuality among the eight shoreline counties. Helping visitors understand the Islands proved to be a blended story that highlighted all six qualities of the Lake Champlain experience: history, natural resources, culture, working landscape, scenery, and recreation.

The recommendations in this plan came directly from the recommendations developed for the roadway corridor studies in the County, information in the County Strategic Development Plan, Town Plans, and ideas and suggestions collected during the public involvement process. Staff and representatives of the Islands Chamber of Commerce, the Economic Development Corporation, Vermont State Parks, and the Islands and Farms Regional Marketing Organization played important roles in the study process. As community residents and leaders, they brought ideas generated during local advisory committee meetings to other organizations in which they participated. They also offered support and technical assistance with resource information. Community members contributed to the writing of the final plan, especially for the Local Successes and Partnerships chapter.

Corridor Management Plan

The Corridor Management Plan (CMP) is organized around the three central goals that were consistently heard from community input: improving the transportation system, strengthening economic development, and enhancing community character. These goals reflect the County’s extensive experience with tourism. They also reflect hopes for the county’s future development.

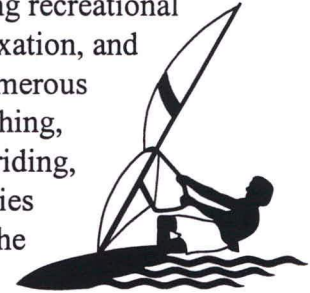
Throughout the planning process, County residents have been clear that the Corridor Management Plan is meant to be used as a guide to actions that support the County’s vision and not as a document for regulatory proceedings. As a vision for the future, the CMP goals can only be realized if residents continue to support a countywide effort. Moreover, while Islanders recognize that open, pastoral landscapes are part of local quality of life and help support the economy, they also recognize the importance of maintaining landowners’ equity in their property and of supporting the other five Byway qualities. The CMP is not intended to replace or take precedence over local planning and zoning. Regulatory efforts to maintain scenic qualities and community character are a town-specific balance between community needs and individual equity.

EXPLORING ISLAND RESOURCES

The Islands are defined by Lake Champlain. It provides the bond that unites cultural traditions and the physical barrier that separates each island from each other and the mainland. In exploring the Islands' resources for common qualities, it became clear that every story blended more than one quality. The Islands' position in Lake Champlain has created layers of human and natural history on a small land base. Sites are used and reused as the landscape evolves. The Islands are a working landscape, continually redeveloped to reflect the economic necessities of sustaining Island life.

Recreation

Surrounded by water with a flat to rolling terrain, the Islands host abundant recreational activities suitable for the individual traveler or a family of visitors. Drawn by a "Come Do Nothing With Us" attitude that the Islands project, visitors soon find themselves seeking recreational activities that strengthen families, contribute to mental and physical relaxation, and provide exercise. With seven State Parks, state fishing accesses, and numerous private sites, visitors can find water-based recreational activities, like fishing, swimming, and boating, and land-based activities, like bicycling, horse riding, hunting, and special events. Recent work to increase recreational activities has focused on increasing access to Lake Champlain and on enhancing the bicycling infrastructure.



Natural

The natural resources of the Islands are the heart of Island living. Resource-based economies -- including farming, forestry, fishing, and quarrying -- allowed for the development of small hamlets and villages in each of the five towns that remain today as important community centers. Ecotourism continues to grow as a new resource-based economic activity of the Islands. Visitors come to learn about geology in Isle La Motte, the Lake Champlain flyway in North Hero, and dune ecology in Alburg. State parks and private preserves provide ready access and interpretation of the natural resources of the Islands. State fish and wildlife areas offer boating, fishing, birding, and hiking opportunities. New partnerships among businesses, interpretive professionals, and resource sites continue to open the Islands to visitors who want to learn about and appreciate their unique (and fragile) ecosystems.



Agricultural

"The Garden Spot of Vermont," "The Beauty Spot of Vermont," town nicknames project images that reflect the extended growing season of the Islands. Thanks to the warming microclimates of Lake Champlain, the Islands support a strong and diverse agricultural economy. In addition to dairy and cattle farms and orchards, visitors will find flower and vegetable farms, vineyards, and

a fish culture station. The Islands climate suggests it will continue to make an ideal setting for agriculture, however the "crop" evolution will likely reflect local, specialty markets and rising land prices. Agricultural tourism is a new addition to the economy of the Islands. It provides support income for some farms and gives visitors a better understanding of farm life.

Cultural

Small, close knit communities characterize much of Vermont, and the Islands are no exception. Cultural expression, however, is found in daily exercises of Islander independence and an appreciation for a unique living environment. Islander independence is a product of the environment. Cut off from the mainland in the past and with limited land connections today, Islanders have relied on their own skills and knowledge to see them through difficult times and to provide their own entertainment. The group "CIDER," Champlain Islanders Developing Essential Resources reflects this cultural trait. Islanders as a whole have a strong entrepreneurial spirit -- 90% of Island businesses are sole proprietor establishment. They evolve with the market, making or selling new products as the market demands. This spirit of finding new opportunities is passed from parent to child.

The environment also contributes significantly to a quality of life, another piece of Island culture. Quality of life is important to those who were born in the Islands, who make it their home, and who reside there in summer. Quality of life is achieved by striking a balance between the other five intrinsic qualities and the economic opportunities that provide for day-to-day living. It is surpassed in its cultural importance only by maintaining independence. Islanders share their culture with others through special events, interpretive programs, and the visual and performing arts.



Historic

Historic and archeological resources are pervasive, but not always publicly accessible. Like many of the Islands' resources, historic and archeological sites have been used and reused throughout the history of the Islands. The sites are often fragile and unable to withstand intense visitation or are privately owned. Islanders rely on a few essential historic sites, several local museums, and informational programs provided by historical societies to tell their stories.



Scenic

Few Island views lack scenic qualities. The combination of farmland, natural settings, Lake Champlain, and the Green and Adirondack Mountains make every setting extra special. Scenery preservation was an important consideration for burying power lines along the US 2 causeway between Milton and South Hero. The South Hero Town Plan identifies several scenic views in the town. US 2 has been identified as a scenic Vermont highway by local, state, and national

travel and tourism publications for many years. This unofficial designation has brought both motorized and non-motorized travelers to the route. However, “drive by viewings” offer few benefits to communities and businesses and may not be the most appropriate way to enjoy the scenery. Through the Byways planning process, Islanders are working to help through travelers, visitors, and residents learn about the County’s resources and services.

ACTION PLAN: THE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

Problem Statement

US 2 is the lifeline of Grand Isle County and is its sole north/south through road. Its historic role as the “Main Street” for the County’s towns -- with distinct villages surrounded by farms and rural residential development -- will likely remain its permanent role due to the County’s physical geography. The County’s special landscape has attracted visitors to the area since the early 1900s. Whether by car, bus, or bicycle, visitors experience a slice of Vermont not many expect.



VT 78 and a portion of US 2 in Alburg are part of the National Highway System (NHS), linking Interstate 87 in New York and Interstate 89 in Vermont. The NHS designation, given to only four other State Highways in Vermont, gives recognition to the fact that this route is extremely important in the national strategic transportation network and is a critical link for Vermont to the rest of North America. The corridor, which experienced the largest increase in traffic volume in the State between 1990-92, carries an usually high proportion of large trucks. At the same time, VT 314, the “ferry road,” has also seen an increase in automobile and truck traffic. The ferry company recently extended service to operate 24-hours a day.

In recent years, US 2 has seen its “Main Street” role expanded to include a highway role. It acts as a highway connector between Grand Isle County, the state of New York, and Chittenden County, Vermont. It also acts as a link to the province of Quebec in Canada. This dual role of highway and “Main Street” results primarily from the poor condition of the Missisquoi Bay Bridge, safety considerations along VT 78, increased commuter traffic from residential development, and the road’s function as the main road connecting the islands to one another. The dual roles create conflicts among the users of the roadways because each user group has different expectations of the road’s purpose and has different travel needs.

Vision Statement

The County’s transportation system acts as a port of entry for visitors to the Islands. Visitors are funneled over bridges and causeways, onto the ferry, and into marinas and public access sites. A visitor-friendly transportation system should welcome visitors to the community, introduce them to services and resources, and offer them a pleasant and safe travel experience.

Goals

- Locate and publicize alternative travel routes for bicyclists that do not wish to travel on US 2.

- Plan for and implement roadway improvements that facilitate travel on foot and by bicycle, horse, boat, agricultural vehicles, and other motorized vehicles.
- Develop transportation services and facilities that meet the needs of all travelers, including publications and information systems, pedestrian crosswalks, multilingual signs, parking, restrooms, and scenic overlooks and pull-offs.

Recommendations

Facility and Service Improvements

Implement improvements that reduce roadway conflicts and enhance safety while retaining the small-scale character of Island communities.

Reducing roadway conflicts is a high priority for local communities. Improvements noted in the Grand Isle County Roadway Corridor Study and the US 2 and VT 78 Transportation Corridor Study, such as reducing lane width, increasing shoulder width, spot safety enhancements, and strengthening the non-motorized transportation system, will support local use and visiting travelers. It should be noted that as the County's "Main Street," the US 2 corridor will continue to draw traffic and activity. On-road improvements will enhance safety for experienced non-motorized travelers, however it is unlikely they will be adequate for less-skilled cyclists and equestrians. Summer-season public transportation and off-road facilities for non-motorized travelers could offer an excellent alternative for reducing roadway conflicts.



- ❑ Build a roadway profile of 11-foot travel lanes on US 2, VT 314, and VT 129, with 4 foot shoulders along US 2 and with 3-foot shoulders on VT 314 and VT 129.
- ❑ Build a roadway profile of 11-foot travel lanes and 5-foot shoulders on VT 78.
- ❑ Modify intersections and install guardrails as noted in the Grand Isle County Roadway Corridor Study and the Transportation Corridor Study for US 2 and VT 78.
- ❑ Continue to work with the Vermont Agency of Transportation to replace the Missisquoi Bay Bridge.
- ❑ Improve or expand recreation access points along VT 78 as noted in the Transportation Corridor Study.
- ❑ Work with South Hero to explore opportunities for converting the Rutland Railroad causeway to a non-motorized trail (in conjunction with the Town of Colchester, the Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization, and the State of Vermont).
- ❑ Explore bicycle and pedestrian facilities on South Street in South Hero, on Shrine and Main Roads in Isle La Motte, within the village of North Hero, and in other locations identified by municipalities.
- ❑ Facilitate multi-modal connections within the transportation system, such as public parking areas that serve commuters and visitors, public transportation, boat-to-shore connections, bicycle racks for business and service locations, etc.
- ❑ Work with the Vermont Agency of Transportation to locate and install share-the-road signs

in selected locations throughout the County.

Develop facilities and services that support the travel experience.

Needed facilities and services specific to the tourism industry of the Islands include public restrooms, scenic pullovers, and roadside picnic or rest areas; as well as improved informational/directional signs and materials. Studies have identified rest areas with bathrooms as a high priority for the traveling public [Impact Research Associates, Inc. 1996]. Some local businesses provide restroom facilities for their customers, but many are limited by available sewage capacity. In recent years, local businesses have also provided port-o-lets, but these are a temporary solution to a longer-term problem. The new Alburg Welcome Center provides restroom facilities in the northern Islands; additional public restrooms should be designated and/or developed at strategic locations elsewhere in the County.

- ❑ Work with other communities participating in the Lake Champlain Byways project to investigate opportunities for construction, maintenance, and management of public restrooms, scenic pullovers, and roadside picnic or rest areas.
- ❑ Investigate grants that support port-o-lets or other short-term strategies for providing restroom facilities.

Village Enhancements

Implement village enhancements that welcome travelers, calm traffic, and create a pedestrian-friendly environment.



Targeted enhancements could help to ease the negative impacts of the roadway on village areas. Signaling village entrances can encourage traffic to slow through village areas. Studies have shown that travelers spend money when they exit their vehicles. Village environments that appear pedestrian-friendly persuade travelers to stop and explore. Pedestrian-friendly environments also encourage residents to shop locally and encourage businesses to centralize in these locations.

All Villages

- ❑ Use granite pavers or rumble strips to provide an audible signal for speed limit reductions at village approaches and gateways.
- ❑ Install village-scale lighting to create a pedestrian-friendly environment.
- ❑ Plant trees to reduce speed limits and create a sense of place.

South Hero

- ❑ Reduce travel lane width to 11 feet and shoulder width to 4 feet within the village.
- ❑ Create a shift in the roadway alignment to offer a visible break in the image of a long, straight road.
- ❑ Implement access management strategies to increase pedestrian safety.

- ❑ Install textured and defined crosswalks to facilitate safe pedestrian travel.

North Hero

- ❑ Delineate parking spaces in front of North Hero House.
- ❑ Install a separated pedestrian path or sidewalk along Lake Champlain between North Hero House and Hero's Welcome. Connect the path/sidewalk to the businesses with textured and delineated crosswalks.
- ❑ Create a gateway at the southern and northern ends of the village.

Grand Isle

- ❑ Define the village entrance and calm traffic with signposts or pillars at the road edge and by installing consecutive rows of granite pavers approximately five feet apart across the travel lanes.
- ❑ Create a bicycle path or wide shoulders along the west side of US 2 between the village and school. Install a crosswalk in front of the school.
- ❑ Install village-scale lighting and share-the-road signs.

Keelers Bay

- ❑ Create 10-foot parallel parking in the village where adequate room exists.

South Alburg

- ❑ Investigate opportunities to reduce the speed of motor vehicles at the south end of the village near the US 2/VT 129 intersection, especially lowering the superelevation or cross slope of the road and cutting back the embankment to increase sight distances.

Alburg Village

- ❑ Promote off-street parking and provide municipal parking lots.
- ❑ Install a new curb along US 2 within the residential area of the Village, creating 11-foot travel lanes and 3-foot shoulders and leaving the sidewalks in place. Plant trees and grass in the resulting green space.
- ❑ Install a new curb along US 2 within the commercial area of the Village, creating 11-foot travel lanes and 10-foot parallel parking on both sides of the street. Plant trees and grass in any resulting green space.

Informational Service Improvements

Assist travelers in finding their destinations and in learning about the heritage of the Islands.

Improved informational services would assist both businesses and visitors and strengthen the Islands' regional identity. One example would include directional signs developed according to uniform sign standards that reflect local character and display a readily identified Islands logo. Additional interpretive signs and historic site markers could also help the traveling public and contribute to an appreciation of the natural and cultural heritage of the Island. Business signs

should also compliment local character in their design, size and location. The Vermont Department of Agriculture is considering a sign program for Vermont farms and related businesses. Signs may also play a strategic role in the development and marketing of the Lake Champlain Byways and other regional initiatives. In all cases, signs should be attractive and well designed, and not be allowed to proliferate. Towns have some ability to control signs in their community through local bylaws and ordinances.

The Alburg Welcome Center provides an outlet for expanded information services in the northern Islands; however, with the closure of the welcome center in South Hero, information resources are lacking on that end of the Islands. One state kiosk, maintained locally, provides limited information regarding local businesses and attractions. Small grants are available to improve information services through the Lake Champlain Basin Program, the Vermont Council of the Arts, and other organizations.

- ❑ Publish and distribute *Bicycling the Lake Champlain Islands* and its accompanying service directory.
- ❑ Develop a cooperative Grand Isle and Franklin County map to show relationships among resource sites, the transportation system, and service centers.
- ❑ Support efforts to provide visitor information at Welcome Centers and other locations with high visitor exposure.

ACTION PLAN: THE TOURISM ECONOMY

Problem Statement

Lake Champlain, the Island's traditional landscape, and the area's rural character combine to make Grand Isle County an attractive tourist destination. Unfortunately, the short summer tourism season decreases the potential for earning income from tourist-based businesses. The potential exists to increase tourism based on recreation, natural and cultural heritage, and agri-tourism. However, the majority of Island residents have not expressed a desire to increase the number of tourists in the busy months because of the development pressures that would accompany the associated need to increase capacity. The challenge, then, lies in increasing the tourism season by extending the time when travelers choose to visit the Islands. The barriers include unpredictable weather and snowfall; lack of marketing resources; limited number and seasonal nature of visitor amenities; the lack of infrastructure to handle large boats; a state brand that does not include a water experience or Lake Champlain identity; and incongruent boundaries between a visitor's desired travel experience and the governmental need for regional travel divisions.

Vision Statement

The County's tourism economy relies on the infrastructure local communities and businesses are able to provide. The foundation for strengthening the tourism economy should be community-friendly actions and strategies that protect quality of life, not increase the local capacity to handle more visitors. There is little desire for large-scale "Disney-like" development, nor incremental over development of the Islands - but facilities and attractions that are in keeping with local character are generally welcome by the community at large. Islanders also welcome facilities and attractions that require visitors to use other businesses and builds the overall economy. Enhancing the tourism season should include extending the length of visitor stays and increasing the length of the tourism season on the Islands.

Goals

- Support the concept of a "shoulder" season for the county's tourism industry by promoting activities that help visitors experience the Islands during April and October. These activities might include bicycling, fishing, and wildlife watching.
- Participate in the Regional Marketing Organization's efforts to link resource sites with visitor services through formal travel packages, informal neighbor referrals, and publications and products.
- Explore marketing the Islands as part of the Lake Champlain Region to enhance the diversity of the tourism clientele and to educate Vermont and New York residents about visitor experiences in the Islands.

Recommendations

Partnership Enhancements

Strengthen and expand partnerships to leverage funding and increase organizational capacity.

- ❑ Strengthen ties and joint marketing initiatives among Island organizations, including Island Arts, local community theaters, historical societies, etc.
- ❑ Continue to support and assist in the development of the State's welcome center in Alburg in cooperation with Vermont's Tours and Detours Program and the Alburg Welcome Center Task Force.
- ❑ Continue to participate in the development of regional marketing efforts, including the state's Regional Marketing Organization initiative, Lake Champlain Byways, Lake Champlain Bikeways, and the Lake Champlain Heritage Trail.

Publications and Identity

#Continue development and promotion of a "Lake Champlain Islands" identity.

- ❑ Create an easily recognized Island's marketing image/logo for use in promotional materials and signs, to create a shared local identity and to maintain the Islands identity in broader regional marketing initiatives.
- ❑ Develop a series of heritage theme tours, maps, and promotional packages.
- ❑ Continue to develop and distribute an annual Grand Isle County promotional brochure.
- ❑ Continue to develop and maintain up-to-date lodging, restaurant and attraction inventories, including capacities and types of facilities and services available and dates of operation, and occupancy data.
- ❑ Continue to work with and promote the Hermann's Royal Lipizzan Stallions and explore additional spin-off activity and packaging opportunities, including other recreation and events that attract animal-lovers.

Infrastructure and Service Development

#Strengthen tourism infrastructure and continue development of visitor services.

- ❑ Provide hospitality training and Islands heritage workshops for local business owners,

fishing facilities and accommodations; other outdoor recreation-based businesses and facilities.

Marketing Initiatives

#Continue existing marketing efforts and develop new efforts that extend the length of visitor stays and increase the length of the tourism season.

- Extend the current season by targeting extended season niche markets.
- Continue past marketing initiatives to include cooperative Islands advertising in targeted market areas and investigate new outlets for targeted marketing efforts. Target areas should include, but not be limited to: the Burlington market area; the state of Vermont; New York, Northern New England; Mid-Atlantic states; Quebec; and, Ontario. Potential outlets which should continue to be explored include radio, e.g., Vermont Public Radio; trade and specialty publications; links through the Chambers web-site; and trade shows.
- Explore options for extending the current tourist season through a variety of strategies. Efforts to expand the season should include the following:
 - Sponsoring special events, possibly in association with professional event promoters, during the non-peak/shoulder seasons (April/May and September/October). Examples of events held at other resort communities in Vermont include antique shows, automobile rallies, horse shows, home and food shows, craft fairs, boat shows, and arts and cultural festivals.
 - Marketing Islands amenities in the Burlington area during non-peak/shoulder season. Strategic marketing should take advantage of peak periods in the Burlington area, such as College graduation, foliage, Jazz Festival, to raise awareness of both Chittenden County residents and visitors who have yet to discover the Islands.
 - Working with local businesses to develop and promote shoulder season activities, package deals, and to develop their on-Island customer base [e.g., for Island restaurants]. Packages and activities compatible with the shoulder season include outdoor recreation activities such as fishing, wind surfing, bicycling, birding, and kayaking.

ACTION PLAN: COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Problem Statement

Community character results from a combination of what people see and what they experience. The development pattern of Grand Isle County is based in its agricultural and tourism past. Large farms covered inland areas while shorelines were sprinkled with summer cottages. A village or town center grew out of the need for a central meeting place for worship, commerce, and governing. Today, agriculture is an integral part of life, but it is no longer the dominating economic force. Land use is shifting with the development of manufacturing, service, and information employment sectors, especially in Chittenden County. The subsequent residential development necessary for these economic sectors is shifting the agricultural landscape to a residential landscape of “bedroom communities” where residents work and shop elsewhere. It has also resulted in a trend of cottage conversion to year-round homes that has increased the need for town services, including sewer, water, and schools.



The cultural character of the Islands is based in their isolated location and an appreciation for a unique living environment. Special events, like church suppers, traditionally brought people together. Islanders have continued to develop special events that celebrate local culture and support the tourism economy. In addition, Islanders have found other ways to convey the Islands character, especially the visual and performing arts and interpretive programs on history and natural resources. Outdoor summer venues are popular, but the mountain/lake setting makes for unpredictable weather. Schools, town halls, and other meeting and performance spaces have seen steady increases in requests for use. Some requests have been denied simply for lack of space. Several historic buildings have been adapted for use by historical societies, libraries, and community organizations. However, not all events and activities are well suited to the size or layout of historic buildings and a need exists for performance, meeting, and display space.

Vision Statement

The built environment and local customs reflect the individual identity of Island communities. Strengthening those individual qualities will help keep the Islands, the Lake Champlain Region, and Vermont as special places. Efforts to enhancing community character should recognize the contributions of residents and visitors and should respect the goals of communities in pursuing tools that reflect their individuality. They should also be based on projects and activities that encourage an understanding and appreciation of both individual and regional character.

Goals

- Implement transportation enhancements that keep our small-scale highway corridor yet meet the needs of our travelers.

- Build a Byways Corridor Management Plan that respects town plans and balances economic development and resource protection with the realities of Island living.
- Support and develop products and activities that enhance appreciation for our working landscape and natural resource based industries so we can maintain our visual relationship with Lake Champlain. Products and activities might include agri-tourism efforts, diversified farm operations and crops, purchase of development rights, educational materials, etc.

Recommendations

Land Use Patterns

#Conserve rural landscape.

The conservation of agricultural lands is a common theme in Grand Isle County. North Hero, Grand Isle, and South Hero -- towns which currently experience the majority of the county's growth -- have developed comprehensive plans and zoning bylaws to direct future growth. The three towns recognize that their proximity to the Burlington Metro Area brings development pressures. Each town has identified village areas in which development should be focused. Both Grand Isle and North Hero have designated village districts, which allow for higher densities and varieties of uses. South Hero, while specifying village areas, does not have a specific village district.

The towns of Alburg and Isle La Motte, which receive fewer development pressures from neighboring communities, have no community plan or zoning regulations. Alburg has recently established a planning commission and begun developing a town plan.

- Support common goals for preserving the county's rural landscape (as identified in the South Hero, Grand Isle, and North Hero Town Plans). These goals include:
 - Preserving the rural, small town character of the County through requiring that growth and development respect the agrarian heritage, natural and cultural resources, and natural beauty that makes the County unique.
 - Directing development into village areas and planned developments in order to maintain traditional development patterns and efficiently provide infrastructure and services.
 - Supporting farming and maintain agricultural land as much as possible to keep the rural landscape of the Town and help the local economy.
 - Enhancing the County's tourism economy through encouraging environmentally sound, clean businesses, new technology, and home-based businesses and providing a broad and stable tax base.
 - Making a commitment to the area's children, families, land, water, and natural beauty to ensure towns remain special and unique to year-round residents as well as to visitors.

- Examining and recommending courses of action relating to recreation, economic development, resource conservation, and community activities through issue-specific committees and working groups.
- Support planning techniques used by communities to conserve the rural landscape. These techniques include:
 - A Town Plan provides the community with a plan of action, or blueprint, which shows a community what it will be like in the future. A Town Plan gives a community the power to guide change and the pace at which change will occur, so that change does not control the future. Communities with a Town Plan are South Hero, Grand Isle, and North Hero.
 - Subdivision and Zoning Regulations help guide and regulate growth that promotes wise land use development. South Hero, Grand Isle, and North Hero have both Zoning and subdivision regulations;
 - Planned Residential Developments (PRD) and Planned Unit Developments (PUD) are used to conserve natural resources while providing for growth through the clustering of structures and infrastructure. Grand Isle and North Hero utilize PRD's and PUD's in their zoning regulations;
 - Issue specific committees examine and recommend courses of action relating to recreation, economic development, resource conservation, and community activities.
- Support the use of innovative agricultural land conservation strategies, including, but not limited to, transfer of development rights, purchase of development rights, fee-simple purchase of agricultural lands, and use value tax assessment.
- Assist municipalities with designated growth centers plan the growth and obtain funding and other resources necessary to support planned development within the growth center's boundaries.
- Encourage the development of public places, cultural events, and the arts within growth centers.
- Support efforts to conserve productive, active farmland in contiguous chunks, where possible.

#Promote and support the agricultural economy.

- Support agricultural programs and products that permit land to remain in agricultural use.
- Encourage agri-tourism efforts that provide secondary incomes to agricultural producers.
- Encourage not only the viability of individual farms, but also maintenance of a sufficient density of farms in an area to encourage the provision of affordable farm services.

Cultural Character

#Create an environment where expressions of local culture can continue to thrive.

- Support efforts to create a visual and performing arts center.
- Support efforts to cooperatively market the visual and performing arts.

#Support historic preservation efforts that develop an appreciation and respect for local customs and culture.

- ❑ Support efforts to protect the geologic resources of the Islands and to educate residents and visitors about the importance and use of those resources.
- ❑ Encourage projects and activities that build a link between Island history and the present-day landscape that visitors observe.

#Support efforts to conserve and enhance the natural landscape.

- ❑ Support efforts to protect the unique natural features of the Islands and to educate residents and visitors about the importance and use of those resources.
- ❑ Encourage projects and activities, like the Spring Birding Events and the Lake Champlain Birding Trail, that build a link between the County's natural features, sustainable tourism efforts, and Island character.

LOCAL SUCCESSES AND PARTNERSHIPS

Bicycling the Lake Champlain Islands



The Lake Champlain Islands Chamber of Commerce, Lake Champlain Bikeways, Vermont State Parks, the Northwest Regional Planning Commission, and local citizens teamed up to produce "Bicycling the Lake Champlain Islands." This guide to cycling in the Islands is complete with photos, maps, and historic interpretation. It explores five loops that offer cyclists alternatives to cycling on US 2 and VT 78 while they learn about the wonderful features of the area. The guide includes a service directory of bicycle-friendly businesses and attractions. The guide will be distributed in 1999 throughout Grand Isle County and at various gateways in the Lake Champlain region. Lake Champlain Bikeways has agreed to promote it through national feature releases and on its web site, www.lakeplacid.com/bikeways.

Vermont State Parks

Vermont State Parks attract approximately one million visitors per year, collecting over three million dollars in park receipts, primarily through park user fees. Grand Isle County, with five state parks, has more per mile than any place else in Vermont. Grand Isle State Park, with annual visitation at nearly 40,000 camper nights, is the State's busiest campground. Sand Bar State Park, just across the US 2 causeway from the Islands, is the State's most popular day use area, with nearly 60,000 annual visits. Combining day and overnight visitation, and including Sand Bar, some 125,000 people annually visit area parks, while spending \$300,000 on park fees.

A 1993 study by the University of Vermont determined every dollar spent by visitors on Vermont park fees generates another eighteen dollars spent on durable goods (camping and recreation equipment, etc.) and twelve dollars spent on non-durable goods (groceries, gasoline, meals, bait, camping and picnic supplies, attraction fees, etc.) within an area economy – a 30:1 ratio! Factored out, those 125,000 visitors to area parks generate nine million dollars in annual economic activity. At the same time, Vermont State Parks receive no general fund tax support for their operation or maintenance, relying instead on a combination of park receipts (60%) and lease receipts (40%). This has led to what may be described as an almost entrepreneurial spirit among park managers that is unique to "normal" government operations. Park managers are eager to work with other businesses and organizations in forming travel and tourism partnerships for co-marketing, packaging, and promotion of a variety of vacation components. One program, Wayfinder coupons, offers a two-for-one admission to Vermont State Parks to visitors who stop at rest areas and welcome centers in Franklin and Grand Isle Counties. Another coupon program teams State Parks with Historic Preservation sites to offer visitors incentives to visit historic sites and camp in state parks.



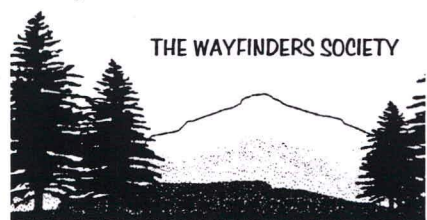
The parks also develop cooperative ventures with local organizations who use the park facilities or amenities for festivals, trainings, and educational programs. Park partners include schools, the Chamber of Commerce and Regional Marketing Organization, Island Arts, fire departments and rescue squads, Applefest, Lake Champlain Committee, and VT Fish and Wildlife.

Islands Arts Center

Sharing the Islands' character with visitors and residents is one goal of a growing partnership to find cooperative space for community services and the arts. CIDER, Islands in the Sun Senior Center, South Hero Players, Village Players, and Islands Arts Council have joined together after discovering each organization needed a new or larger space to carry out its activities or services. The organizations believe that youth are the Islands' future and the elderly are an important part of the history and character of the County. Recognizing that a substantial pool of artistic talent existed within residents and seasonal visitors, the partnership decided to take advantage of that talent to encourage both young and old to continue to reside in the county and to share their talents with visitors. The partnership's vision is to have a common facility to house local services and provide space for the visual and performing arts.

Rest Area Task Force and The Wayfinders Society

The Rest Area Task Force (RATF) is a group of volunteers who first rallied to stop the closing of the I-89 rest areas in Franklin County. Since successfully lobbying to keep the rest areas open, the RATF has evolved to focus on management and staffing issues in welcome centers and rest areas in Franklin and Grand Isle Counties. One outcome of this effort is the WayFinders Society, started through a grant from the Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing. Helping travelers find services and attractions is a key component of WayFinder Society activities. In 1998, over 240 hours of volunteer time were provided between August 7 and October 12. The



plan for the future is to make the WayFinders Society a self-sustaining organization working with the State and area Chambers of Commerce. In order to grow and maintain its effectiveness, additional volunteers will be sought from all walks of life. It is the goal of the WayFinders Society to eventually become a statewide program.

Isle La Motte Coral Reef Preservation

Isle La Motte is one of the world's richest sites for the study of geology. Its unique features include what has been called "the world's oldest reef," the Chazyan Coral Reef, which underlies the southern third of the island. Recognized by geologists and paleontologists around the world, the reef represents an extremely valuable resource for paleontological research and is a source for local pride. It stands as the state's only example of an Ordovician coral reef and is considered among the world's best such geologic representations. In the 19th Century, the reef also provided

two kinds of stone geologically known as Black River limestone and Chazy limestone (part of the ancient reef structure) which was shipped all over the country. The black limestone, marketed as black marble, was used in NY City's Radio City Music Hall (Radio Black) and the floor of the Vermont State House. Only one quarry on the island remains active today, but a number of buildings built with Isle La Motte "marble" still stand.

In 1998, a proposal to reopen the Fisk Quarry on the southern end of the island prompted local citizens, working with the Lake Champlain Land Trust and the Preservation Trust of Vermont, to purchase the Quarry and hold it in trust as a preserve. This new partnership, known as the Isle La Motte Reef Preservation Trust, hopes to use the quarry to promote a better understanding of the island's geologic and cultural history. One interpretive sign has already been installed and the site has been included in the Islands Bicycling Guide. The partnership is now looking for funds to develop a management plan for the property's future.

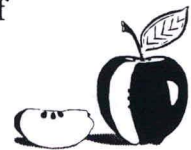
Agri-Tourism

A leisurely drive through the Champlain Islands brings travelers past many farms. The rural character of our county is being preserved by these farms, and our farmers encourage and welcome visitors to experience and enjoy agriculture first-hand. Some of our farms are open to the public. Some farms offer tours or farm vacation stays. Agri-tourism provides an opportunity for the visitor to learn more about agriculture, how our food is grown, and what life on a farm is



all about. The Islands offer extensive agri-tourism opportunities including watching a dairy farmer milk the herd, picking apples at local orchards, going on a llama trek, buying home-grown produce at a farmer's market, sampling wines at a local winery, and trying some ostrich meat! Three local successes highlight the many agri-tourism efforts in the Islands.

- Applefest is an annual event that showcases the apple harvest and the beauty of the Islands. For two days in October, South Street in South Hero hosts thousands of people who enjoy the fruits of the apple harvest through a variety of activities and, of course, apples served up in a variety of delicious ways! Many county non-profit organizations participate in the event as a fund raiser for their cause.



- Summer concerts at Snow Farm Vineyard and Winery in South Hero bring a taste and appreciation of wine, cheese, and other agricultural products to an outdoor concert setting. The Vineyard is also one site of the Vermont Mozart Festival concert series.



- The Vermont Fresh Network was developed by the Vermont Department of Agriculture to encourage partnerships between local farmers and chefs in area restaurants. The program promotes buying fresh, locally grown produce, giving farmers the opportunity to create value added products and providing chefs with high quality, farm fresh products. Farmers and restaurants in Grand Isle County participate in the Network.

Spring Birding Events

The Champlain Islands are located on an important northern corridor of the Atlantic Flyway. Each year hundreds of avian species make their way through the Islands on their way to their summer nesting sites. Building on the growing demand for ecotourism opportunities, North Hero House and the Green Mountain Audubon Society initiated a spring birding event partnership to help visitors and residents learn about birding opportunities. The three-month schedule of events combines the birding expertise of Audubon Society staff with services and facilities of the Inn, a sea kayak tour company, and local, state, and federal resource sites. The partnership represents one of many packaging opportunities that benefits both businesses and resource sites.



Island Geology

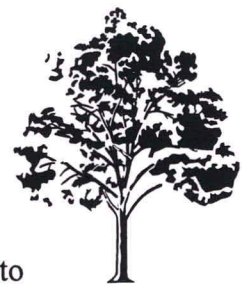
The geology and natural geographic features of Isle La Motte and South Hero are highlighted in a series of roadside signs installed in both towns. The towns won grants from the Lake Champlain Basin Program for the project. These signs compliment two interpretive guides designed to help bicyclists understand the local landscape. A geologist and local resident produced the guides and partnered with the towns to develop the signs. The guides are sold at Bike Shed Rentals in Isle La Motte and Hero's Welcome in North Hero.

Islands and Farms Regional Marketing Organization

As one of 12 Regional Marketing Organizations in Vermont, the *Islands and Farms* RMO represents a partnership of Grand Isle and Franklin County chambers of commerce, businesses, and institutions who have joined together to strategically market the Northwest Region. The RMO established a joint 800 number to receive visitor phone calls passed down from the State, developed a regional web site, and created a series of travel packages to unite services and attractions. The partnership is also in the process of developing a "lure piece" to tell the story of the Region and is participating in a pilot study with another RMO to develop a coordinated booking system for lodging establishments.

Community Forestry

The Ice Storm of 1998 was devastating for Grand Isle County. Ice, wind, and falling trees brought down electrical and telephone lines and blocked roads, interrupting emergency and support services. It also severely damaged trees, in many instances creating a landscape unrecognizable from the week before the Storm. Realizing the importance of trees as natural resources and as an integral part of the scenic landscape, all five towns in the County have joined together with the Vermont Urban and Community Forestry Program to address damages caused by the Ice Storm and to expand community forests to



create a scenic and inviting experience for resident and visitors of Grand Isle County. As part of the Program, each community will develop a forestry plan, educational materials, planting strategies, and maintenance programs.

Alburg Rail Trail

Through a joint effort of the Alburg Sno Springers, Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife, Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation, and the Town of Alburg, 3.5 miles of the former Central Vermont Railroad were converted to a cinder-surfaced, all-season trail. The trail passes through the Mud Creek Wildlife Management Area and is jointly managed and maintained by the partnership. The trail is used primarily as a snowmobile trail and walking path, but it has also been discovered by local cyclists and birders.



The Countryside Exchange

The Countryside Exchange, a program of the Glynwood Center of Cold Spring, New York, is based on the premise that rural areas and small towns in many countries share the same problems and face similar economic and environmental challenges. The goal is to help communities build vibrant economies while protecting their natural and cultural resources. Grand Isle County residents applied to participate in the 1999 program. The County was selected as one of 11 communities worldwide. The Exchange process will bring together people involved in local community development projects in Europe and North America with their counterparts in the Champlain Islands. The communities have chosen three issues for the Exchange team to address: 1) refining the economic development strategy, 2) creating a common vision for growth, and 3) fostering intergenerational activities. The Exchange is scheduled to take place in October, 1999. Implementing ideas developed as part of the Exchange is likely to require a strong partnership among individuals, community organizations, municipalities, and state and federal agencies.

STRATEGIES FOR PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

Grand Isle County represents an unusual piece of the Lake Champlain Byway effort. The county's fragile island environment limits infrastructure development and economic opportunities. It also intensifies and concentrates the negative aspects of tourism since those impacts cannot be spread over a broad land base. Because of the unique nature of the County, communities are putting considerable thought into deciding how to continue activities and projects. Several tools and strategies are being explored to see how they meet the County's specific needs.

Existing Work Programs

Activities and projects will be continued using current programs and funding mechanisms. In fact, many of the organizations involved in the development of County-wide studies and the Lake Champlain Byway Corridor Management Plan have already incorporated specific actions into their Year 2000 work programs. Municipalities will continue their community development efforts. The Northwest Regional Planning Commission will continue to assist communities with addressing activities and issues that cross town boundaries, like transportation enhancements, lake access improvements, and ice storm recovery. The Chamber, the State, and other organizations will continue with programs and activities that forward their missions. Several benefits and drawbacks of continuing activities through existing work programs were identified throughout the Lake Champlain Byway planning process.

Strengths and Opportunities

- Continuing activities through existing work programs may increase buy-in from individual organizations.
- Clearly demonstrates an organization's capacity and willingness to support projects and activities.
- Maintains a stable playing field for projects and programs because organizations know what to expect in the development and review process.

Weaknesses and Threats

- Work program priorities change with evolution in organization leadership.
- Existing work programs may not encourage thinking "out of the box" for new partnerships.

Lake Champlain Byway Designation

A local, state, or national designation could be sought by local communities either informally as waypoint communities or formally through the Vermont Byways Program. Because the Vermont Byways Program is new (August 1998), Vermont's experience with byways is limited. Many Lake Champlain Byway participants were unsure of what a state designation would mean for their communities. Only one designated route has been approved, the Connecticut River Byway stretching from Massachusetts to Canada. Research on programs in other states has

shown a variety of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that can accompany a designation.

In an effort to facilitate discussion on what designation could mean for Grand Isle County, the Byways Local Advisory Committee sponsored an informational session on designation. Representatives of the Connecticut River Byway in Vermont and the Champlain Trail Byway in New York talked about the benefits and concerns related to state designations in their regions. Session participants asked a variety of questions. Several benefits and drawbacks of a byway designation were identified.

Strengths and Opportunities

- Designation could provide a framework and guidance for effective road and right-of-way management and use by ensuring the public and Byways partners are involved.
- Designation could provide stronger local control over the roadway because state agencies are required to keep their activities in conformance with the CMP.
- Designation could facilitate a regional tourism and economic development strategy to improve community services, tourism business, tax revenue, and jobs.
- Designation unifies a region in such a way that visitors see it as a destination. It usually unifies multiple political and jurisdictional entities.
- Byway designation could provide the incentive for improved community and traveler services through public/private cooperation and Byways grants.
- Byway designation could provide access to federal and state Byway funds that allow for a variety of planning, implementation, and construction projects.

Weaknesses and Threats

- Designation could encourage the overuse of the area and adversely impact the region through increased traffic on local roads, increased conflicts in uses, and degradation of community resources.
- Designation could encourage an extended planning process without developing useful products.
- Designation could foster too much commercial development or development that does not blend with community character.
- Designation could foster dependency on federal Byways funding that is not guaranteed for the long-term.
- Designation could begin at the local level, then be interpreted by the State to fulfill a different agenda.
- Designation could trigger Act 250 scrutiny and regulatory control of the properties along the corridor.
- Designation could adversely impact industrial or agricultural development by limiting travel corridors for large vehicles.

Participation in a Lake Champlain Byway designation is a decision that will be made by each community. Yet, the County's unique geography presents forces communities to look beyond their borders because any individual designation decision will affect the county as a whole. Because the concept of Lake Champlain Byways involves numerous counties and cross regional travel, communities may chose to continue planning efforts regardless of designation because of positive or adverse impacts as the result of a byway designation in another Lake Champlain county.

Celebration Champlain

A celebration of the 400th anniversary of Champlain's arrival at Lake Champlain and the Richelieu River could be used as a catalyst for uniting projects throughout the Region. It could also be used as a medium for drawing federal funds to the region as was done for the 300th and 350th celebrations, potentially through the Champlain Valley Heritage Corridor project.

Strengths and Opportunities

- The Celebration offers a focused way to honor local efforts while building new partnerships.
- The seven-year celebration period offers an extended time to make a difference in local and regional efforts.
- It is an event *for ourselves* and not just for visitors.
- The Celebration concept crosses the boundaries of tourism, economic development, community infrastructure, and community pride.
- The Celebration would strengthen local appreciation for the region's history and assets and leave a legacy of community and economic development in the region.

Weaknesses and Threats

- The Celebration event may eclipse the vision, leaving participants unfocused when the event is over.
- Special events require strong regional organizational capacity to champion the vision.
- The Lake Champlain Region or local communities could be overwhelmed by the number of potential visitors.
- Communities may chose not to participate, but may still feel the effects of increased visitation.
- There may not be sufficient time to plan and implement infrastructure improvements.

NEXT STEPS

While Grand Isle County communities continue to explore the idea of creating a byway around Lake Champlain, individuals and organizations will continue to implement the actions outlined in this Plan and other plans that affect the County. Immediate next steps for implementation include:

| Date | Task | Partners |
|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| October 1999 | Publish and distribute <i>Bicycling the Lake Champlain Islands</i> and its accompanying service directory. | NRPC, Chamber, State Parks |
| October 1999 | Host the Countryside Exchange program. | Towns, NRPC, Islands Chamber, Grand Isle Co. Economic Development Council, Community Organizations |
| November 1999 | Submit a county-wide VAOT Transportation Enhancement Program application for village enhancements that welcome travelers, calm traffic, and create a pedestrian-friendly environment and for exploring bicycle accommodations in Isle La Motte. | Towns, NRPC, VAOT |
| December 1999 | Develop a cooperative Grand Isle and Franklin County map to show relationships among resource sites, the transportation system, and service centers. | RMO partners |
| January 2000 | Expand County EDC and Islands Chamber capacity by locating permanent office space and creating a mid-Island visitor center. | Islands Chamber, Grand Isle Co. Economic Development Council |
| April 2000 | Develop and distribute a cooperative publication to promote local theater. | South Hero Players, North Hero Players, Franklin County All Arts Council |
| June 2000 | Continue to explore Celebration Champlain. | Byways LAC, Towns, NRPC, Community Organizations |
| September 2000 | Continue to explore byways designation. | Byways LAC, Towns, NRPC, VAOT |

APPENDIX A: RESOURCE INVENTORY SITES

Sites noted in the resource inventory are publically-owned or are private resources listed in the Lake Champlain Basin Program recreation database. Other private sites can be added at the request of the site owner.

| <u>Site Name</u> | <u>Town</u> |
|-------------------------------------------|---------------|
| Fish & Wildlife Access | Alburg |
| Fish & Wildlife Access | Alburg |
| Alburg Dunes State Park | Alburg |
| Alburg Village Park | Alburg |
| Kelly Bay Fish & Wildlife Access | Alburg |
| Mud Creek Wildlife Management Area | Alburg |
| Ed Weed Fish Culture Station | Grand Isle |
| Grand Isle State Park | Grand Isle |
| Hyde Log Cabin | Grand Isle |
| Lake Champlain Ferries: Grand Isle | Grand Isle |
| South Sister Island | Grand Isle |
| The Gut Fishing Access | Grand Isle |
| Tudhope's Sailing Center | Grand Isle |
| Valentines Fish & Wildlife Access | Grand Isle |
| Young Island | Grand Isle |
| Holcom Bay Fish & Wildlife Access | Isle La Motte |
| Isle La Motte Historical Society | Isle La Motte |
| St. Anne's Shrine | Isle La Motte |
| Stoney Point Fish & Wildlife Access | Isle La Motte |
| City Bay, North Hero | North Hero |
| Fish & Wildlife Access | North Hero |
| Dunham's Bay Sea Ray | North Hero |
| Kings Bay Fish & Wildlife Access | North Hero |
| Knight Island State Park | North Hero |
| Knight Point State Park | North Hero |
| North Hero Fish & Wildlife Access | North Hero |
| North Hero State Park | North Hero |
| Park | North Hero |
| Pelots Point Fish & Wildlife Access | North Hero |
| Apple Island Resort | South Hero |
| Camp Skyland | South Hero |
| Allen Point Fish & Wildlife Access | South Hero |
| Keeler Bay Fish & Wildlife Access | South Hero |
| South Hero Bicentennial Museum | South Hero |
| South Hero Marsh Wildlife Management Area | South Hero |

APPENDIX B: BYWAY-RELATED INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Local Governmental Organizations

Conservation Commissions
Design Review Boards
Planning Commissions
Recreation Committees
Selectboards
Zoning Board of Adjustments

Regional Organizations

Champlain Islands Chamber of Commerce
Champlain Islands Parent-Child Center
Economic Development Corporation
Island Arts
Islands and Farms Regional Marketing Organization
Islands in the Sun Senior Center
Johnson State College
Lake Champlain Basin Program
Lake Champlain Bikeways
Lake Champlain Walleye Association
Northwest Regional Planning Commission
Northwest Vermont Public Transit Network
Rest Area Task Force
The Wayfinders Society
University of Vermont
Vermont Association of Snow Travellers
Vermont Youth Conservation Corps

Local Organizations

Churches
Community Organizations
Historical Societies – Isle La Motte, Alburg
Isle La Motte Reef Preservation Trust
Libraries – All towns
Schools
Theater Groups – South Hero Players, Village Players

APPENDIX C: RELATED LOCAL STUDIES, PROGRAMS AND MARKETING EFFORTS

Building Bridges, A Strategic Development Plan for Grand Isle County, VT

Draft Community Development Goals: Isle La Motte and Alburg Town

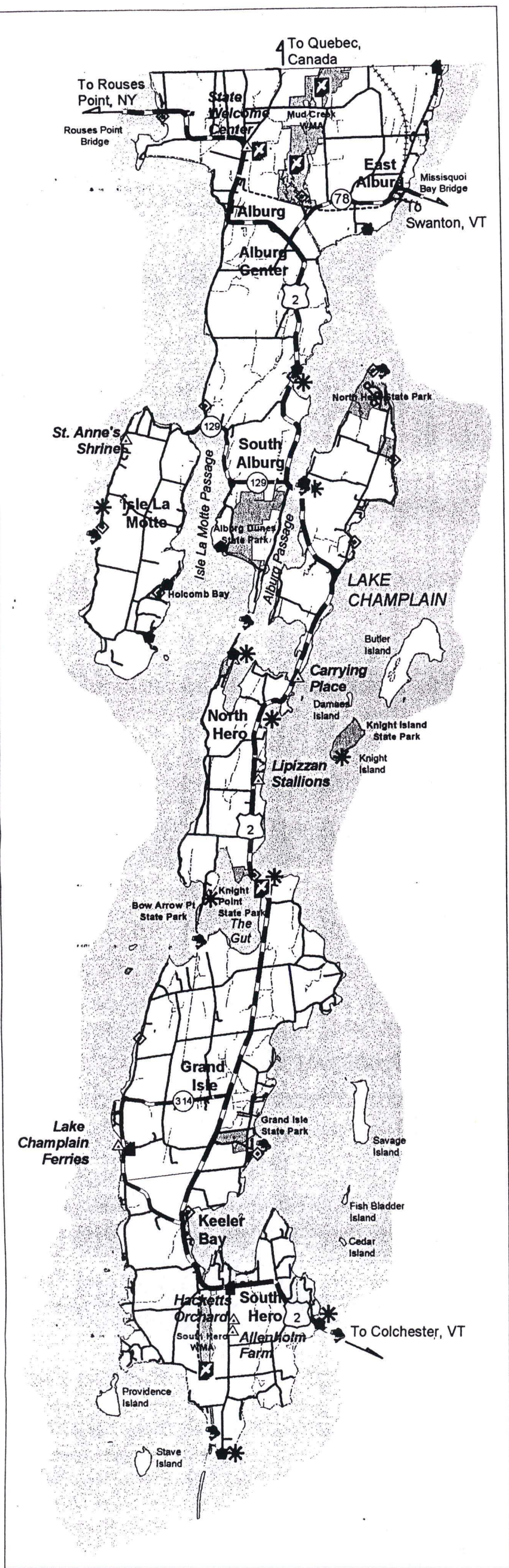
Grand Isle County Roadway Corridor Study

Lippizan Stallions Marketing Study

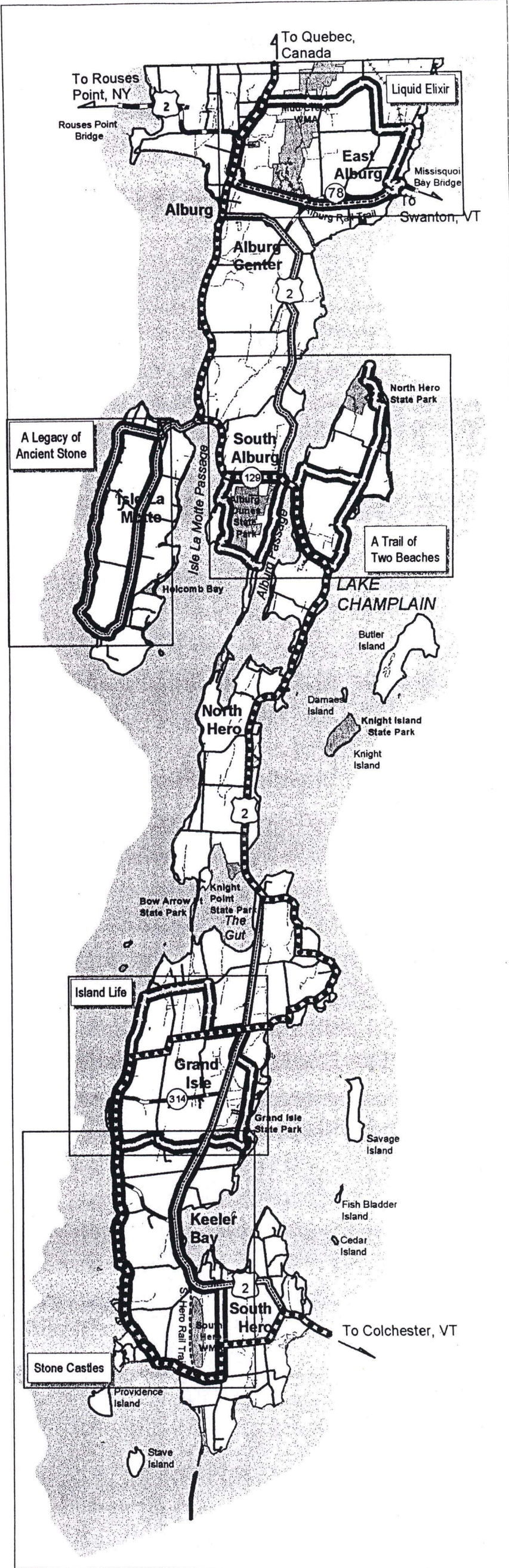
Proposed Master Plan: The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Education Center

Town Plans: South Hero, Grand Isle and North Hero

Transportation Corridor Study, US Route 2 and VT Route 78



MAP 1
COUNTY RESOURCES



MAP 2
LAKE CHAMPLAIN BIKEWAYS ROUTES

| LEGEND | | | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
|  | State Highway |  | NRHP |  | Lake Champlain Bikeways Principal Route |
|  | Federal Highway |  | Tourism Destination |  | Lake Champlain Bikeways Alternative Route |
|  | Other Road |  | Public Boat Launch |  | Bicycle Theme Loop |
|  | Railroad |  | Private Boat Launch |  | Rail Trail |
|  | Surface Water |  | Wildlife Management Area | | |
| | |  | Public Fishing Access | | |
| | |  | Private Marina | | |
| | |  | State Park | | |



**LAKE CHAMPLAIN BYWAYS
CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT PLAN**

N

Prepared by the
Northwest Regional Planning Commission
July 1999
For planning purposes only.

Notes

Our Past, Our Future: **Exploring the Lake Champlain Byways in Chittenden County, Vermont**



Imagine the village centers, scenic vistas, working landscapes, bustling downtowns, and the blue waters of Lake Champlain as the pearls of a necklace.

*Each pearl has a unique luster. Each pearl is valued. A common strand makes the necklace whole.
The Lake Champlain Byways are the strands that connect the communities - or pearls - around the Lake.
Now imagine leaving this "string of pearls" for the enjoyment of future generations.*

LAKE CHAMPLAIN BYWAYS CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT PLAN

November 1999

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Our Past, Our Future: Exploring the Lake Champlain Byways in Chittenden County, Vermont

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**December 1999
PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT**

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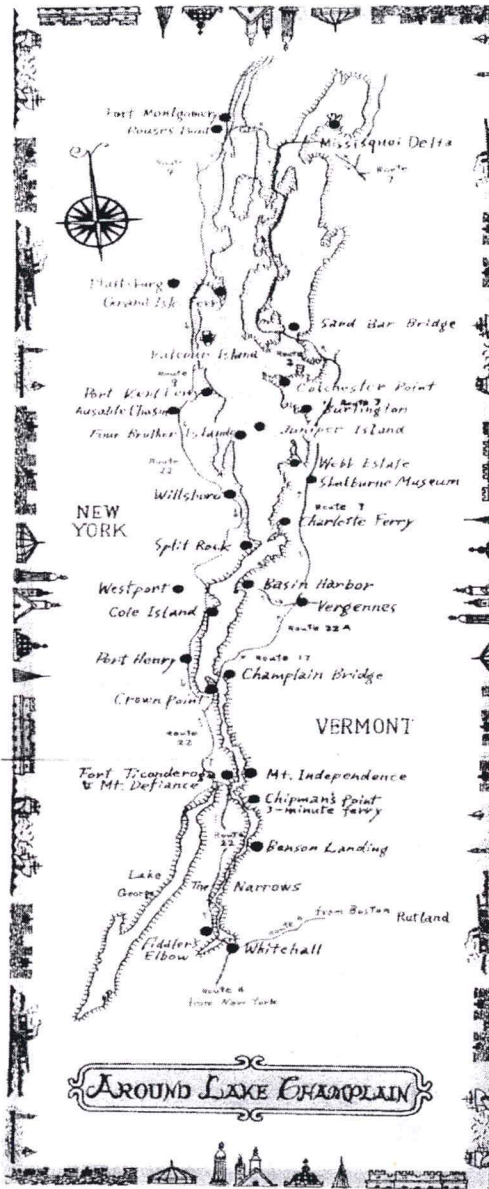
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The Lake Champlain Byways Project Partners

Addison County Regional Planning Commission
Burlington Bikeways, Inc.
Champlain Valley Exposition
Champlain Valley Heritage Network
Charlotte Conservation Commission
Chittenden County Transit Authority
City of Burlington
Clinton County, New York Planning Department
Ethan Allen Homestead
Essex County, New York Planning Department
Lake Champlain Bikeways
Lake Champlain Basin Program
Lake Champlain Basin Science Center
Lake Champlain Byways
Lake Champlain Transportation
Lake Champlain Visitors Center

Metropolitan Planning Organization
Morgan Horse Farm
New York Department of Transportation
New York Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
Northwest Regional Planning Commission
Rutland Regional Planning Commission
Shelburne Museum Shelburne Farms
Vermont Department of Marketing & Tourism
Vermont Agency of Transportation
Vermont Department of Forest & Recreation
Vermont Railway
Unites States Federal Highways Administration
University of Vermont Consulting Archaeology Program
University of Vermont History Department
Washington County, New York Planning Department
Winooski Valley Park District

Note: A detailed project partners list including contacts, addresses, and telephone numbers is located in Appendix D.



From Lake Champlain: A Guide and Story Handbook
By Fred Copeland, 1958

INTRODUCTION

Lake Champlain once brought us together. For centuries, working maritime vessels navigated the Lake's waters. They transported raw materials, finished goods, and people to points in Vermont, New York, and Quebec. The Lake connected us to the rest of the world. Lake Champlain connected us to each other.

Advances in transportation eroded that connection. The 19th Century's railroads and the 20th Century's highways made water travel obsolete. Instead of being a connection between the communities along its Vermont and New York shores, the Lake became a barrier that kept them apart. The Lake Champlain Byways (LCB) Project seeks to change this perception.

Following over 230 miles of spectacular shoreline, the proposed LCB will link the Lake's communities together again. It will feature a network of motorized and non-motorized routes that encompass North America's 6th largest lake. It will provide access to the Lake's expansive blue waters, the area's working lands, and the region's picturesque mountain peaks and lush forests. The network will link our communities again.

For the most part, designated national and state byways are linear in form. The proposed LCB is a circular tour around the Lake offering a unique blend of natural beauty and brilliant history. The Byways corridor contains four transportation modes that make up an interconnected travel network. Bicycle paths, waterway routes, walking trails, and roads will bring residents and visitors closer to the Lake, and to each other.

This Plan summarizes strategies and actions to enhance and create opportunities for travelers to enjoy the region by train, ferry, bike, boat, horse, plane and automobile. This Plan is a work in progress. It is a living document. Changes are encouraged. Like the communities along the Lake, this Plan should evolve over time.

VISION

Good planning and sustainable development principles will guide future decisions related to the development of the Byway. The Chittenden County – Lake Champlain Byways (CC-LCB) Vision is:

To be part of a Lake Champlain Byways region of communities that is economically, socially and environmentally healthy, safe, caring, prosperous and diverse for both residents and visitors.

What is a Vermont Byway?

A Vermont byway is a highway or other public road that has special scenic, historic, recreational, cultural, archeological and/or natural qualities, and that has been formally designated by the state. Vermont has adopted a program and an approach to nominating a byway for state designation.

The intent of the program is to recognize routes that feature some of Vermont's outstanding intrinsic resources. It is not to preclude land development. It is not to be used in the Act 250 review process.

Any group, community or individual can nominate a stretch of highway or other public road for designation, but strong local support must be demonstrated and a proposed byway management plan must be in place before designation can occur.

What is a National Scenic Byway?

The Federal Highways Administration defines a National Scenic Byway as possessing outstanding qualities that exemplify the regional characteristics of our nation. A National Scenic Byway contains at least one of the following significant features: scenic, historic, natural, cultural, recreation, or archeological.

CHARACTER

Chittenden County is beautiful. It offers a unique balance of quality jobs, recreation and education. It is a warm, inviting place to live, work, and play. Chittenden County is part of the Lake Champlain Byways region and can be characterized as:

- The regional hub for transportation, communication, education and technology.
- A place with metropolitan amenities with a hometown feel.
- The cultural center for the arts, festivals, and special events.
- A place rich in history, but embracing the future.

STRATEGIC ISSUES AND GOALS

When the LCB Project began in 1997, a group of individuals, business owners, and representatives of nonprofit and government organizations formed the CC-LCB Local Advisory Committee (LAC). This grassroots group steered the approach to developing a management plan for the proposed byways. A detailed account of the LAC's creation, organization and efforts is located in Appendix A.

The LAC raised several issues that helped to frame this Plan's focus. The LAC expressed the need to achieve sustainable growth in the tourist economy, in community development, and in the conservation of valued resources.

Lake Champlain Byways Background:

As the National Scenic Byways Program got underway in 1992, recreation and tourism experts began implementing a program aimed to develop a national network of scenic byways. This prompted New York and Vermont planners to seek seed funding to explore the byways program and to develop a Corridor Management Plan for a bi-state route around Lake Champlain.

Specific issues raised by the LAC early in the planning process include the need for:

- Safer pedestrian and biking facilities.
- Safer parking to trail facilities.
- Improved multi-modal linkages to public features.
- Better directional signage for attractions and services.
- Additional public rest rooms.
- Better coordination between transportation services and attractions.
- Promotion of the Lake region as a whole.
- The need for tour packaging.
- Help from the state in promoting the region.
- Breaking down the boundaries and "turf issues" among tourism groups and attractions.
- Safe transportation alternatives.
- Public perception of tourists/tourism.
- Improved promotion of the byways region.
- Building partnerships to increase awareness about our rich history, cultural treasures, outdoor recreation opportunities, and scenic beauty.

The challenge for many planners and decision-makers will be in identifying a balance between the booming multi-million dollar tourism industry and the preservation of our quality of life. How do we plan and implement strategies and actions that will meet the growing demands of the tourism industry? How do we properly host our guests and maintain community character?

OBJECTIVES

This Plan contains three broad strategies to identify, implement and manage the CC-LCB. The intent of this Plan is to provide the framework needed for state designation of the LCB as a Vermont Byway (New York has already designated Routes 9 and 22 as the *Champlain Trail*, a state scenic byway). The Plan's purpose is to create strategies and specific goals for long-term management of the Byway.

The proposed strategies and actions contained in this Plan – and the products developed at the local level – will help to address the barriers, or strategic issues, raised by the LAC. Utilizing these strategies will help create models for improving public access to the County's rich historic, cultural, scenic, archeological, recreational, and natural resources.

The LAC's intent is to encourage decision makers at all levels to consider designation of the LCB. Designation will lead to environmental and economic benefits for the region's communities and transportation systems. Three broad strategies must be developed before implementation can take place.

What can a designated Byway do for your community?

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) awarded New Hampshire \$2.9 million and New York \$2.8 million in byways enhancement grants in FY 1999. This money went to improve roads, construct visitors' centers and facilities, implement marketing strategies, design web sites, and build trails, sidewalks, and bike paths.

Note: Vermont received \$36,000 from FHWA for byways projects in FY 1999.

The three broad objectives for the Lake Champlain Byways are:

1. TRANSPORTATION AND MULTI-MODAL CONNECTIONS:

To enhance transportation infrastructure and develop multi-modal (auto, bicycle, pedestrian, ferry, equestrian, train, boat, bus, and air travel) improvements in community transportation centers for visitors and residents.

2. INTRINSIC RESOURCES AND PARTNERSHIPS:

To create and support educational and recreational opportunities for visitors through strong partnerships with organizations, businesses, nonprofit groups and agencies that have an interest in conserving the significant intrinsic resources of the Byway.

3. SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

To promote and enhance tourism opportunities for the region through sustainable economic development and conservation of intrinsic resources.

TRANSPORTATION AND MULTI-MODAL CONNECTIONS

To enhance transportation infrastructure and develop multi-modal (auto, bicycle, pedestrian, ferry, equestrian, train, boat, bus, and air travel) improvements in community transportation centers for visitors and residents.

OVERVIEW

The Lake Champlain Byways (LCB) is a travel corridor. It contains a network of multi-modal transportation routes that give travelers choices when exploring the region. Waypoint communities and multi-modal transportation centers – or Mode Nodes – link these travelways.

The LCB transportation network is comprised of four primary travelways. These are:

1. **The Champlain Trail** is a New York State Scenic Byway for motor vehicles. This route runs from Hudson Falls to the Canadian border. It offers outstanding views of Lake Champlain, the Green Mountains, and the area's working landscape. Vermont's lakeside communities are currently considering nominating road segments for possible state byway designation. Vermont's designation of U.S. Route 2, U.S. Route 7, and VT Route 22A would create a motorized byway around the Lake. This Plan outlines the proposed routes of the Chittenden County section of the Champlain Trail. (*The Proposed Lake Champlain Byways, Motorized Transportation Routes map is located in Appendix B.*)
2. **Lake Champlain Bikeways** is a network of bicycle routes around the Lake. Its principal route, the Champlain Bikeway, encircles the Lake. Specialized interpretive

loops branch from the main route, providing bicycle access to the region's communities and attractions.

"Cycle the City: A 10-Mile Self-Guided Historic Tour of Burlington, Vermont" is the first of these interpretive bike loops to be developed in Chittenden County. (*A map of the ten proposed loops and a "Cycle the City" brochure are located in Appendix B & H.*)

3. **Lake Champlain Walkways** is a proposed network of the "best" walks and hikes in the Champlain Valley. These walking routes (located on and off roads) may also have interpretive and educational elements. This network is in the pilot/study stage. (*An inventory of the County's existing walking trail resources is located in Appendix G.*)
4. **Lake Champlain Waterways** are routes for non-motorized boaters. They connect the Lake's communities and natural resources via water travel. The "Champlain Paddlers' Trail" is the first route of its kind on the Lake. These water routes are excellent venues for interpretive and educational elements.

Note: This Plan identifies suggested travelway routes for CC-LCB. It also suggests strategies to enhance and improve these travelways.

THE CHAMPLAIN TRAIL

Chittenden County is the motorized transportation hub for the LCB. Visitors to the region might use Interstate 89 (I-89), U.S. Routes 2 and 7, Burlington International Airport, Lake Champlain Transportation's ferries, and/or Amtrak to access and enjoy the LCB.

U.S. Routes 2 and 7 are proposed as the "Main Routes" of the Champlain Trail (see *Proposed Lake Champlain Byways, Motorized Transportation Routes* map in Appendix B). These principal motorist routes include four points of entry into the County:

East /West

U.S. Route 2 follows the scenic Winooski River, brushes the edge of downtown Burlington where it joins U.S. Route 7, heads north through historic downtown Winooski and rural Colchester, and then leaves U.S. Route 7 in Milton to access beautiful Grand Isle County.

North/South

U.S. Route 7 forms the north/south spine through the County. It links Addison, Chittenden and Franklin counties. Local history recalls that U.S. Route 7 was originally constructed to bring tourists to Vermont.

There are plans to improve a three-mile stretch of the U.S. Route 7 corridor running from the commercial area of South Burlington to the Village of Shelburne. A stretch of the U.S. Route 7 corridor extending south through

Charlotte and Ferrisburgh is being studied for transportation improvements. Enhancements to U.S. Route 7 between Winooski and Georgia are also being studied.

The goals and objectives of this Plan should be considered in these corridor studies. This Plan should help planners identify improvements to strengthen the CC-LCB Corridor.

A network of "Secondary Routes or Spurs" is proposed for the slower motorized and non-motorized travel. Visitors might enjoy a ferry ride across Lake Champlain; or explore the shoreline on a paddler's tour; or ride horseback through the area's picturesque working landscape from these secondary routes. These secondary routes are identified on the *Proposed Lake Champlain Byways, Motorized Transportation Routes* map in Appendix B.

Strategic Actions:

Suggested improvements to the Lake Champlain Trail:

- Work with the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), Vermont Scenery Preservation Council, Vermont Agency of Transportation (VAOT), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), LCB corridor communities (Milton, Colchester, Winooski, Essex Junction, Burlington, South Burlington, Shelburne, and Charlotte), and local businesses and organizations to obtain Vermont State byway designation for The Champlain Trail.

- Implement suggested improvements to U.S. Route 7 corridor running from the commercial strips of South Burlington to the Village of Shelburne.
- Implement suggested improvements of stretch of the U.S. Route 7 corridor extending south through Charlotte and Ferrisburgh.
- Implement suggested improvements to U.S. Route 7 between Winooski and Georgia.
- Support vegetation management, viewshed protection, pedestrian improvements, and guardrail construction along Riverside Avenue in Burlington. See *Item 3 on Proposed Byways Transportation Improvements (PBTI) map, located in Appendix B. Note:* This project is funded for 2001.
- Implement suggested improvements for U.S. Route 2/7 Winooski River Bridge. See *Item 10 on PBTI map.*
- Design and construct a scenic overlook on U.S. Route 7 in Charlotte. See *Item 11 on PBTI map.*
- Encourage construction of picnic/parking area near Bostwick Road railroad overpass in Charlotte. See *Item 17 on PBTI map.*
- Develop Class 2 bike lane improvements in Burlington from Home Street to Battery Park via Lakeside. See *Item 4 on PBTI map. Note:* These improvements are funded for 2001.
- Support planning for bike path/road improvements in Burlington for bicycle/pedestrian crossing on U.S. Route 7 to South Burlington bike paths. See *Items 5 & 39 on PBTI map.*
- Support improvements to Route 127/Plattsburgh Avenue crosswalk. See *Item 7 on PBTI map.*

- Support construction of safe pedestrian crossing on U.S. Route 7 in Charlotte to access Mt. Philo Road/State Park See *Item 12 on PBTI map.*
- Support widening of Ferry and Bostwick roads in Charlotte for bicycle/pedestrian safety. See *Item 13 on PBTI map.*
- Support Colchester bicycle/pedestrian improvements as suggested in "Route 127 Corridor Study." See *Items 16, 19, 24, & 52 on PBTI map. Note:* Item 16 is funded for 2000
- Explore widening of U.S. Route 7 from Route 127 to U.S. Route 2 in Colchester. See *Item 20 on PBTI map.*
- Support improvements for bicycle-friendly travel along U.S. Routes 2 and 7 in Milton. See *Item 28 on PBTI map.*

The National Scenic Byways Program will support improvements on designated byways:

Eligible projects for FHWA funding include:

- Planning and design of state byway programs
- Safety improvement projects
- Construction projects for pedestrians, bicyclists, rest areas, interpretive facilities, highway shoulder improvements, passing lanes, and overlooks.
- Marketing byways.
- Projects for recreation access, enhancement and protection of significant resources.

LAKE CHAMPLAIN BIKEWAYS

Supported by the Lake Champlain Basin Program and several private and nonprofit organizations, Lake Champlain Bikeways has played an important role in the LCB planning process. Initiated in 1993, Lake Champlain Bikeways is working with local communities to develop a network of bicycle theme loops throughout the Champlain Valley in Vermont and New York, and in the Upper Richelieu River Valley of Quebec. Lake Champlain Bikeways has also taken the lead to promote the Champlain Valley as a premier bicycle-touring destination. It provides cycling publications through an information clearinghouse. Lake Champlain Bikeways also works with local communities and businesses to make the region more bicycle-friendly by creating and enhancing bicycle routes and services.

Bikeways Assessment and Planning – To address the needs of bicyclists within the LCB corridor, Lake Champlain Bikeways advocates the development of a network of bicycle theme loops. The proposed network is based on an assessment of over 1,200 miles of roadway for bicycle route suitability.

Assessment criteria include: roadway surface condition (paved and unpaved), shoulder and lane width, perceived traffic volume, terrain, cycling ability, and aesthetics. Between 1996 and 1998, this endeavor involved the assessment of over fifty loops ranging in distance from 5-60 miles in Vermont and New York. Ten loops (in addition to “Cycle the City”) are proposed for Chittenden County.

Planning/Implementing Bicycle Routes – Using the information collected in the assessment phase, interested communities began working with Lake Champlain Bikeways staff in 1997 to implement bicycle theme loops throughout the region. The assessments helped local planners focus their energies. The experience of other lakefront communities served as a starting point for local initiatives. The blending of history, recreational opportunities, and available services for bicyclists enabled community groups to develop theme loops of local significance. These theme loops are promoted through brochures, guidebooks and maps. Since 1996, the original 350-mile Lake Champlain Bikeways route has grown to include 24 theme loops throughout the region.

Lake Champlain Bikeways developed a methodology for assessing and establishing theme loops. These methods are described in “Let’s Bike the Corridor!” The overall goal is to preserve, enhance, and to promote high-quality bicycling experiences in the Lake Champlain Valley.